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AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method for conducting electronic commerce, comprising:
electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, a preselected comparison shopping site (["[]]CompShop["[]]"), and inquiring about the item and comparative prices thereof;
running, by the preselected CompShop, a query on a plurality of electronic stores carrying the item, and asking for a price of the item, the plurality of electronic stores including at least one smartStore; and
determining by the at least one smartStore that the query is received from the preselected CompShop; and
selectively determining, by ~~at least one of the plurality of electronic stores functioning as a~~ the smartStore["[]], an offer price of the item and selectively returning one of a static price and a modified price, the modified price resulting from the ~~at least one of the plurality of electronic stores~~ smartStore learning a best offer price received by the preselected CompShop from ~~all of the plurality of electronic stores.~~
2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
returning a standard price by at least one of the plurality of electronic stores determined not to be the smartStore.
3. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
sending, by the smartStore, a request to the preselected CompShop asking for comparative prices of the item; and
determining, by the smartStore, whether an asking offer price is the best offer price that can be offered, wherein if the asking offer price is determined to be a lowest price, then the smartStore returns its static price.

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4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
if the asking offer price is determined not to be a lowest price, then adjusting by the smartStore, the price; and
returning a new price to the preselected CompShop.
5. (currently amended) The method of claim 4, wherein the at least one of the electronic stores automatically changes the price depending on the customer for the item asking for the price and what the lowest price is as recorded by the preselected CompShop.
6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
maintaining, by the smartStore, a list of preselected comparison shopping sites.
7. (currently amended) The method of claim 6, further comprising:
if a request is made from other than the list of preselected comparison shopping site sites, then returning by the smartStore, the static price; and
if the request for the price is from ~~a CompShop~~ the list of preselected comparisons shopping sites, then submitting by the smartStore a request to the preselected CompShop or ~~another CompShop~~ to get a list of all comparison prices for the item.
8. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising:
when the smartStore obtains the list of all comparison prices, determining whether the smartStore can offer a lowest price.
9. (previously presented) The method of claim 8, wherein the smartStore determines whether it can afford to offer the lowest price based upon the list of all comparison prices and its own cost price and required profit margin.
10. (currently amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

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4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
if the asking offer price is determined not to be a lowest price, then adjusting, by the smartStore, the price; and
returning a new price to the preselected CompShop.
5. (currently amended) The method of claim 4, wherein the at least one of the electronic stores automatically changes the price depending on the customer for the item asking for the price and what the lowest price is as recorded by the preselected CompShop.
6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
maintaining, by the smartStore, a list of preselected comparison shopping sites.
7. (currently amended) The method of claim 6, further comprising:
if a request is made from other than the list of preselected comparison shopping site sites, then returning by the smartStore, the static price; and
if the request for the price is from ~~a CompShop~~ the list of preselected comparisons shopping sites, then submitting by the smartStore a request to the preselected CompShop or ~~another CompShop~~ to get a list of all comparison prices for the item.
8. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising:
when the smartStore obtains the list of all comparison prices, determining whether the smartStore can offer a lowest price.
9. (previously presented) The method of claim 8, wherein the smartStore determines whether it can afford to offer the lowest price based upon the list of all comparison prices and its own cost price and required profit margin.
10. (currently amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

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if the smartStore can offer the lowest price, then returning the lowest price to the preselected CompShop.

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

if the smartStore cannot offer the lowest price, then returning its static price to the preselected CompShop.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

returning, by the preselected CompShop, a list of prices to the customer.

13. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

selecting, by the customer, based upon prices received, a choice of one of the plurality of electronic stores for providing the item.

14. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the item comprises a product.

15. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the item comprises a service.

16. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the best offer price is a lowest offer price.

17. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the best offer price is a highest offer price.

18. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

caching, by the preselected CompShop, prices received from the plurality of electronic

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stores.

19. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
caching, by the smartStore, a list of prices received from the preselected CompShop.
20. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the smartStore selectively visits the
preselected CompShop, such that information from the preselected CompShop is cached by the
smartStore for a comparison with a price request occurring between visits to the preselected
CompShop.
21. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein a price comparison is performed
on an identical item and a substantially identical item, and
wherein a graded price is offered on the substantially identical item.
22. (currently amended) A system for conducting electronic commerce between a customer
and one of a plurality of electronic stores, comprising:
a plurality of electronic stores; and
a preselected comparison shopping site ~~operatively~~ coupled to the plurality of electronic
stores and a customer interested in purchasing an item,
wherein at least one of the plurality of electronic stores comprises a smartStore
that recognizes a query from the preselected comparison shopping site; and
an electronic medium for linking the customer, each of the plurality of electronic stores,
and the preselected comparison shopping site together electronically,
wherein the preselected comparison shopping site runs ~~[[a]]~~ the query on the
plurality of electronic stores and requests an offer price of the item, and
wherein the smartStore determines a predetermined offer price of the item from
the plurality of electronic stores and selectively returns one of a static price and a modified price,
the modified price resulting from the smartStore learning a lowest offer price received by the

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preselected comparison shopping site from all of the plurality of electronic stores.

23. (currently amended) A system for performing electronic commerce, comprising:
a preselected comparison shopping site (CompShop);
means for electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, the preselected CompShop, and inquiring about the item and comparative prices thereof;
means for running, by the preselected CompShop, a query on ~~all of~~ a plurality of electronic stores ~~it is aware of~~, asking for a price of the item; and
means for determining, by at least one of the plurality of electronic stores that recognizes the query from the preselected CompShop, an offer price of the item and returning one of a static price and a modified price, the modified price resulting from the at least one of the plurality of electronic stores that recognizes a query from the preselected CompShop learning a lowest offer price received by the preselected CompShop from ~~all of~~ the plurality of electronic stores.

24. (currently amended) A signal-bearing medium tangibly embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method of conducting electronic commerce, the method comprising:

electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, a preselected comparison shopping site (CompShop), and inquiring about the item and comparative prices thereof;

running, by the preselected CompShop, a query on ~~all~~ a plurality of electronic stores ~~it is aware of~~ asking for a price of the item; and

determining, by at least one of the plurality of electronic stores that recognizes the query from the preselected CompShop, an offer price of the item and returning one of a static price and a modified price, the modified price resulting from the at least one of the plurality of electronic stores that recognizes the query from the preselected CompShop learning a lowest offer price received by the preselected CompShop from ~~all of~~ the plurality of electronic stores.